DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 327 IR 050 689

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TITLE Survey of the Status of Materials Selection Policies in Iowa Public School Districts in 1983 and Comparisons with Status in 1979. Based on a Study Sponsored by State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction and Department of Library Science, University of Northern Iowa.
INSTITUTION Iowa State Dept. of Public Instruction, Des Moines.; University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls. Dept. of Library Science.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 19p.; For related document, see ED 188 606.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Board of Education Policy; Censorship; *Educational Media; *Instructional Materials; Learning Resources Centers; Library Materials; *Media Selection; Models; Policy Formation; Questionnaires; *School Districts; School Libraries; School Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Iowa

ABSTRACT

Replicating a 1979 study, a survey of school library media specialists in 440 Iowa school districts was conducted in the spring of 1983 to determine the influence of a model policy published by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction (DPI) on the development, adoption, and provisions of school district policies for the selection of instructional materials. There was a 91% response rate to the survey. It was found that the number of school board adopted policies increased significantly between 1979 and 1983; that the larger school districts were more likely to have a policy; and that there was a substantial amount of activity in formulation of new policies or in updating and revision of existing policies in the 4-year period. Local policy features based on the DPI model policy were found to include policy coverage of all instructional materials (rather than only library materials), detailed selection criteria, and procedures for delegating selection responsibility, reevaluating and withdrawing materials from existing collections, and handling objections to materials. It was concluded that the existence of the DPI model selection policy had an influence on the nature of local policies, but that the model's impact on school board adoption of selection policies was unclear. This report describes survey methodology and findings and presents a sample questionnaire. (ESR)

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4200-E42397-9/83

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ED242327

SURVEY OF THE STATUS OF MATERIALS SELECTION POLICIES IN IOWA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN 1983 AND COMPARISONS WITH STATUS IN 1979

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Based on a Study Sponsored by State of Iowa
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1983

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Existence of a model policy for the selection of instructional materials published and widely disseminated by a state department of public instruction suggests some interesting questions for research. Does the model encourage development of policies in local school districts? How closely do existing school policies adhere to the philosophy and dynamics of the model? Does the model foster a trend toward action on the part of local school boards to adopt a selection policy as one of their official policies?

Answers to these and other questions about the Iowa Department of Public Instruction's publication Selection of Instructional Materials: A Model Policy and Rules (Des Moines: DPI, 1975; revised, 1980) were sought in two surveys. The first was funded by the Iowa Educational Media Association and carried out by its Committee on Intellectual Freedom in the spring of 1979. A replication of the 1979 study was funded jointly by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Library Science, University of Northern Iowa, and was carried out by the author in the spring of 1983.

Table 1 compares the number of responses received in the two studies. In 1979 87.02 percent of the 447 existing districts returned the survey instrument while 90.68 percent of the 440 districts responded in 1983. The populations of the two studies are similar, but there are some essential differences. In the four-year interval, twelve school districts merged to form six new districts, and one additional district was joined administratively to another in 1982-83 pending a formal merger. These changes account for a reduction of

Table 1

Comparison of Responses Received
For 1979 and 1983 [1]

Size	Possible		Received				Not received [2]	
	79	83	79		83		83	
	N	N	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	75	74	61	81.33	65	87.84	9	12.16
2	76	72	59	77.63	68	94.44	4	5.56
3	75	73	61	81.33	66	90.41	7	9.60
4	76	73	64	84.21	66	90.41	7	9.60
5	74	74	65	87.84	68	91.89	6	8.11
6	71	74	65	91.55	66	89.19	8	10.81
T	447	440	389	87.02	399	90.68	41	9.32
Anon-ymous [3]			14		0			

[1] Populations are not identical.

[2] Figures for 1979 are omitted because of 14 anonymous responses.

[3] Three anonymous responses received in 1983 were not tabulated because a second instrument was mailed with a follow-up letter.

seven in the existing school districts in 1983. An analysis of the respondents for the two studies shows the following likenesses and differences:

Number responding in 1979 and 1983	340
Number responding in 1979 only (includes 7 merged schools)	35
Number responding in 1983 only	59
Number responding to neither study	12
Number shifting in 1983 to an adjacent size group because of enrollment changes	53

Identical survey instruments (see appendix) were used in the two studies to enhance comparability. In both instances instruments were mailed to one school library media specialist in each school district. A follow-up request for completion of the survey instrument was mailed about four weeks later in both studies.

Since the enrollment range among Iowa schools is substantial, schools were divided into six groups according to size for portions of the analysis. The enrollment ranges of the six groups in the 1983 study were:

Size	Enrollment Range
1	129 - 300
2	305 - 427
3	430 - 590
4	600 - 790
5	796 - 1,461
6	1,475 - 31,780

In the four years between the two studies a significant change occurred in the number of school board adopted policies as reported by responses to Question 1. The 1979 study revealed the existence of 160 board-adopted policies representing 41.13 percent of the 389 respondents and 35.79 percent of the total potential of 447 school districts (see Table 2). In the 1983 study 214 respondents (53.63 percent of the 399 responding) reported board-adopted policies (48.64 percent of the 440 school districts in Iowa at the time of the study). Using the number of respondents the difference between those schools having board-adopted policies in 1979 and 1983 is significant at the .01 level (X^2=12.05 with one degree of freedom). The X^2 statistic (70.67 with one degree of freedom) using the total number of school districts is significant at the .001 level. The 1979 study revealed a relationship between a school district's having a board-adopted selection policy and school size. It appeared that the larger the school district enrollment the more likely the school board would be to have an adopted policy. Data for the 1983 study were analyzed using chi square to determine if size is indeed a factor. The X^2 statistic (98.42 with ten degrees of freedom) shows a significant difference in size of school and existence of board-approved policy at the .001 level. Table 2 suggests that the trend is in the same direction in both studies; that is, the larger the district, the more likely it is to have a policy. In 1983 the range was from eighteen adopted policies (27.69 percent of responding schools) in Size 1, the smallest districts, to fifty-eight (87.88 percent) in Size 6, the largest school districts. It should be noted, however,

that every size group reported increases in the number of adopted policies as shown by the following table:

Number of Adopted Policies by School District Size
And Increase between 1979 and 1983

Size	1979[1]	1983	Increase
1	6	18	12
2	16	21	5
3	20	29	9
4	26	43	17
5	39	45	6
6	50	58	8

[1] Does not include 3 anonymous responses.

Table 2 also shows other categories of responses to Question 1. The number of respondents reporting no policy in existence declined from 124 (31.88 percent) in 1979 to 97 (24.31 percent) in 1983. The most frequently reported alternative between no policy and a board-adopted policy in both studies was a policy developed by the school library media specialist having no official status.

Question 1 also asked respondents to indicate the year in which selection policies were adopted. Not everyone supplied a date, but a comparison of the responses in the two studies shows a substantial amount of activity in formulation of new policies or in updating and revision of existing policies in the four-year period. The following table shows reported dates, with results for the last year in each

Table 2

Question 1. Comparison of Status of Selection Policies[1]
In Iowa Public School Districts
For 1979 and 1983

	Size 1				Size 2				Size 3				Size 4				Size 5				Size 6				Anonymous[2]				Total			
	79		83		79		83		79		83		79		83		79		83		79		83		79				79		83	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			N	%	N	%
A	6	9.84	18	27.69	16	27.12	21	30.88	20	32.79	29	43.94	26	40.63	43	65.15	39	60.00	45	66.18	50	76.92	58	87.88	3	21.43			160	41.13	214	53.63
B	4	6.56	2	3.08	1	1.69	1	1.47	2	3.28	3	4.55	2	3.13	2	3.03	3	4.62	7	10.29	3	4.62	4	6.06	0	0.00			15	3.86	19	4.76
C	2	3.28	5	7.69	3	5.08	6	8.82	2	3.28	3	4.55	3	4.69	2	3.03	4	6.15	2	2.94	2	3.08	1	1.52	0	0.00			16	4.11	19	4.76
D	9	14.75	7	10.77	6	10.17	6	8.82	11	18.03	9	13.64	11	17.19	8	12.12	9	13.85	10	14.71	4	6.15	1	1.52	2	14.29			52	13.37	41	10.28
E	37	60.66	32	49.23	29	49.15	32	47.06	20	32.79	19	28.77	19	29.69	10	15.15	8	12.31	4	5.88	2	3.08	0	0.00	9	64.29			124	31.88	97	24.31
F	3	4.92	1	1.54	4	6.80	2	2.94	6	9.84	3	4.55	3	4.69	1	1.52	2	3.08	0	0.00	4	6.15	2	3.03	0	0.00			22	5.66	9	2.26
Total	61		65		59		68		61		66		64		66		65		68		65		66						389		399	

[1]Populations of two studies are not identical.

[2]Three anonymous responses received in 1983 study were not tabulated because a second instrument was mailed with a follow-up letter.

Lines A-F are question 1 a-f on the survey, shown in the Appendix, p. 17.

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instance reflecting activity only through April/May when the studies were conducted. Figures for 1983 include revisions as well as new policies.

Dates of Adoption of Board-Approved Policies

Year of Adoption	1979 Study	1983 Study	Year of Adoption	1979 Study	1983 Study
1965	1		1975	19	11
1966	0	1	1976	15	11
1967	0		1977	30	13
1968	4	1	1978	18	24
1969	6	4	1979	3	21
1970	9	4	1980		23
1971	3	2	1981		27
1972	9	5	1982		36
1973	13	7	1983		13
1974	11	7			

Question 2 asked whether the DPI model policy was used in developing a local policy. Table 3 displays the data for those respondents reporting board-adopted policies. In 1979, 79 school districts (50.32 percent) reported using the model while 145 (67.76 percent) reported using it in 1983. The X^2 statistic (X^2=11.56 with two degrees of freedom) shows a significant difference between the two years in the

Table 3

Question 2. Comparison of Use of Selection of Instructional Materials[1]
For Board-Adopted Policies
For 1979 and 1983

	Used				Not used				No Response[2]				T	
	1979		1983		1979		1983		1979		1983		'79	'83
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1	2	33.33	13	72.22	2	33.33	3	16.67	2	33.33	2	11.11	6	18
2	8	50.00	17	80.95	7	43.75	3	14.29	1	6.25	1	4.76	16	21
3	10	50.00	16	55.17	8	40.00	8	27.59	2	10.00	5	17.24	20	29
4	12	46.15	30	69.77	12	46.15	11	25.58	2	7.69	2	4.65	26	43
5	21	53.85	32	71.11	12	30.77	13	28.89	6	15.38	0	0.00	39	45
6	26	52.00	37	63.79	19	38.00	14	24.14	5	10.00	7	12.07	50	58
T	79	50.32	145	67.76	60	38.22	52	24.30	18	11.46	17	7.94	157	214

[1]Iowa. Department of Public Instruction. Selection of Instructional Materials: A Model Policy and Rules. Des Moines: DPI, 1980.

[2]Includes ambiguous responses and question marks.

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use of the model at the .01 level. Influence of the model policy is also possible among those school districts reporting the use of other schools' policies as their basic guides to policy formulation.

Question 3 asked respondents to indicate the presence of 13 specific elements in their selection policies. The responses, tabulated in Table 4 for board-adopted policies, are not totally indicative of the true picture and should be considered only as a partial profile of existing policies. Some respondents who reported board-adopted policies for their school districts did not complete Question 3. Several indicated more than one response to part e. Some checked both k and l, which should be mutually exclusive, but were apparently not carefully enough worded to avoid some alternative interpretation.

Interesting observations can still be made, however, from Table 4. A definite tendency for revised or new policies to cover all instructional materials, as provided for in the DPI model, as opposed to library materials only is evident. In 1979 eighty-four respondents identified board-adopted policies which covered all instructional materials. That number increased by forty-six to 130 in the 1983 study. In contrast, seventy-two policies were reported as covering library materials only in 1979 and eighty, an increase of eight, were so reported in 1983.

At the time of its publication in 1975, the DPI model appeared to be unique in several aspects. Among these are the amount of detail and specificity provided in the language of the model for selection criteria, for delegation of responsibility for selection, for provision for reevaluation of and withdrawal from an existing collection, and for

Table 4

Number of Schools Indicating Presence
Of Specified Elements
In Adopted Policies

	Elements in Policy	Size						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	T
	Number of adopted policies	18	21	29	43	45	58	214
a.	Covers all instructional materials	9	12	16	27	27	39	130
b.	Covers library materials only	7	8	13	15	20	17	80
c.	Lists criteria for selection	15	15	23	35	41	50	179
d.	Identifies procedures for selection	10	15	23	30	24	39	141
e-1.	Delegates selection responsibility to media specialist/s	15	20	25	37	39	48	184
e-2.	Delegates selection responsibility to teachers	1	5	8	5	7	18	44
e-3.	Delegates selection responsibility to principal/s	0	4	1	6	4	4	19
e-4.	Delegates selection responsibility to superintendent	0	0	0	3	1	2	6
f.	Provides for reevaluation and withdrawal	15	20	23	32	40	51	181
g.	Provides for acceptance and rejection of gifts	11	10	20	24	22	38	125
h.	Describes objection procedure	16	20	25	34	41	51	187
i.	Provides for informal resolution of objection by discussion	10	11	15	25	30	32	123
j.	Includes form for requesting reconsideration	16	21	22	33	42	54	188
k.	Provides for appointment of committee for each objection	11	16	23	33	38	47	168
l.	Provides for committees to meet regularly for objections	6	4	5	8	7	17	47
m.	Includes lay persons on committee	11	12	19	24	24	43	133

step-by-step procedures for handling objections to materials. Table 4 indicates that a high percentage of adopted policies include these elements with 179 (83.64 percent) having criteria for selection; 181 (84.58 percent) having a reevaluation and withdrawal provision, and 187 (87.38 percent) giving a procedure by which objections are treated. Question 3e-1 shows that selection of materials is delegated to media specialists in 184 instances (85.98 percent). Several respondents who checked delegation of responsibility to teachers and/or principals annotated their responses to show that that responsibility is for textbooks and other classroom materials.

The DPI model also pioneered in three aspects of the objection process it provides. These are inclusion in the step-by-step procedure of an attempt to resolve an objector's concerns by informal discussion; provision for a standing committee to hear objections, and inclusion of lay persons in the community as members of the standing committee. Table 4 shows that two of these aspects are accepted and included in well over half of the existing board-adopted policies. Informal resolution of an objection occurs in 123 (57.48 percent) and inclusion of lay persons on the committee in 133 (62.15 percent). The idea of a standing committee is least well-accepted. As suggested earlier, the responses to Question 3k and 31 are unclear, but a definite tendency to appoint an ad hoc committee for each objection seems to be observable. It should be noted that the DPI model borrows heavily from the policy developed for the Cedar Rapids Community School District by Robert Foley, who at the time was director of that district's school library media

program. A large school district such as Cedar Rapids might well receive sufficient objections to make a standing committee practical. A small school district which has not experienced an objection prior to adopting its policy might feel appointment of an ad hoc committee better suited to its needs. The standing committee is, however, an important dynamic of the DPI model which is intended to permit handling an objection in a low-key and democratic environment. The philosophical integrity of the DPI model is diminished by failure to include provision of a standing committee in a local policy.

The existence of the DPI model has clearly had an influence on the nature of selection policies in local school districts in Iowa. A number of respondents sent copies of their district policies, and examination of those policies, along with responses to the survey, shows concepts as well as specific wordings from the model. The question of the model's influence on school boards in adopting policies is ambigious. The climate for censorship has been favorable in the 1980's because of the work of such persons as Mel and Norma Gabler and such groups as the Moral Majority. One can neither discount nor measure the influence of the publicity given to censorship attempts nationally and in Iowa on local school boards. The existence of the DPI model, however, with its legal citation for the policy statement, legitimizes the idea of a local policy and makes its formulation much easier than if each local district started from scratch to develop a policy and its accompanying rules.

Future studies might expand on the 1979 and 1983 studies in the following ways:

1. Because the two studies were developed from the perspective of the school library media specialist only general questions were asked about textbook and classroom materials selection. More definitive questions could be asked about that and other aspects of the model.
2. Recently the Iowa School Board Association published a selection policy model. Questions about the impact and influence of that model will be appropriate in the future.
3. Little is known about the experience of Iowa school districts in interpreting and applying selection policies with the exception of a study by Agnes Stahlschmidt ("A Workable Strategy for Dealing with Censorship." Phi Delta Kappan. 64 (October, 1982), 99-101.) about the Cedar Rapids Community School District. Answers to many questions about experiences with objections in other school districts with board-adopted policies could be sought.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER _____

TO: One school library media specialist in each Iowa public school district

FROM: Mary Lou McGrew

DATE: February 25, 1983

In cooperation with Dr. Betty Jo Buckingham and the Alternative Programs Section of the Department of Public Instruction I am conducting a second survey of the status of selection policies in Iowa public schools. You are the only person in your school district from whom this information is being sought. Please respond by filling out the checklist below and returning it in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope by March 18, 1983.

We have identified your school district by its official DPI number only for the purposes of analyzing the data with regard to school district size and doing a follow-up request to those districts who do not respond by the indicated return date. Individual school districts will not be identified in summarizing the data. If you prefer to respond anonymously you may cut off the identification number.

1. Check the phrase which most closely describes the current status of a selection policy in your district.

   _____ a. officially adopted as school board policy in _____ (give year)
   _____ b. considered and approved by school board but not adopted as official policy
   _____ c. has administrative approval but board has not acted
   _____ d. has been developed by library media specialist(s) and/or other faculty but has no official status
   _____ e. none exists
   _____ f. other; please explain _____

   IF YOUR ANSWER TO NUMBER 1 ABOVE WAS "e", STOP HERE AND RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE. IF NOT, PLEASE GO ON.

2. _____ Yes Has your policy been developed or revised after consideration of the model
   _____ No provided by the Department of Public Instruction publication Selection of Instructional Materials: A Model Policy and Rules (1975)?

   If other models were used in addition to or in lieu of the DPI model, please indicate:

   _____ ALA/AASL Policies and Procedures _____ NCTE Right to Read _____ Other
   Please specify _____

3. Check any items below which are incorporated in your selection policy.

   _____ a. covers all instructional materials (textbooks, other classroom items, print and audiovisual media)

   _____ b. covers library media materials only

   _____ c. lists criteria for selection of materials

   _____ d. identifies procedures for selection

   e. delegates major responsibility for selection to: (we recognize that the board of directors has ultimate responsibility)

   _____ 1) media specialist(s) _____ 3) principal(s)
   _____ 2) teachers _____ 4) superintendent

   _____ f. includes provision for reevaluation and withdrawal

   _____ g. includes provision for acceptance and rejection of gifts

   _____ h. describes an objection procedure

   _____ i. provides for informal resolution of an objection by discussion among parties involved

   _____ j. includes form on which objector may request consideration of item for withdrawal

   _____ k. provides for a committee to be appointed to consider each individual objection

   _____ l. provides for a committee which meets regularly to consider objections

   _____ m. includes lay persons as members of the reconsideration or objection committee

IF YOUR ANSWER TO NUMBER 1 ABOVE WAS "a", WE WILL APPRECIATE YOUR SENDING US A COPY OF THE POLICY SO WE CAN DEVELOP A RESOURCE FILE FOR FUTURE USE.

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